

Joseph Carpenter's Silversmith Shop  
71 East Town Street  
Norwichtown  
New London County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-248

HABS  
CONN.  
6-NORT  
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CONN-248

JOSEPH CARPENTER'S SILVERSMITH SHOP

Address: 71 East Town Street, Norwichtown, New London  
County, Connecticut

Present Owner: The Society of the Founders of Norwich, Connecticut,  
Inc., Norwich, Connecticut

Present Occupant: Richard S. Sharpe, Architect

Present Use: Architectural Office

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This is an interesting example of a small frame  
silversmith's shop built 1772-1774, representa-  
tive of the extensive silver and pewter industry  
that flourished in the Town of Norwich during the  
18th century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The shop was built for Joseph Carpenter (1715-1804) who made, among other things, gold necklaces and beads, stone earrings and rings, tea-spoons, smelling bottles, spectacles, bonnet pins, tortoise shell buttons, knee buckles, and stock buckles, clocks, watches, and engravings of paintings. Joseph Carpenter paid rent in 1774 to Rev. Benjamin Lord for the land on which his shop stood. This land was part of the parsonage lands which were later ceded to the church. Carpenter's plot, called lot #4, was leased to him for 999 years in 1787. Joseph Carpenter was succeeded by his son Gerard Carpenter who died in 1861. Gerard Carpenter's son Joseph Carpenter became owner of the property after his father's death and used the shop as a grocery store c. 1862- c. 1900. Joseph Carpenter died c. 1910 and the ownership of the shop passed to his sister, Miss Harriet L. Carpenter. The shop was bought from her estate in 1915 by the United Workers of Norwich, a welfare agency. In 1919, the shop was leased to the Daughters of the American Revolution who used it for a museum until 1934. The shop became the property of the present owners, The Society of the Founders of Norwich Connecticut, Inc., in 1956.
2. Date of erection: 1772-1774
3. Builder, suppliers: James Wentworth was paid eleven pounds for putting in foundations, cellar walls, and underpinning. Joseph Carew supplied boards. John

Danforth supplied stepstones, shingle nails, and eight scaffold poles.

15-

4. Notes on alterations and additions: The building was repaired and restored in 1916 under Norman Morrison Isham, Architect. Partitions have been installed to accommodate the present office, but they do not affect the original fabric of the building.
5. Sources of information: Jim Darby, "The Joseph Carpenter Shop of Norwichtown, Connecticut" (Student paper in office of Prof. Carroll L. V. Meeks, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; January 9, 1957).  
Measured drawings of Joseph Carpenter's Silversmith Shop prepared by and in the possession of the present owner, Richard S. Sharpe, Architect, 71 E. Town Street, Norwichtown, Connecticut. Philip A. Johnson, "The Silversmiths of Norwich, Connecticut," Antiques, June 1961, pages 570-571.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This is a small frame building, one-and-a-half stories high with a gambrel roof, built 1772-1774 as a shop.
2. Condition of fabric: Good

### B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: This is a small rectangular building with a 30' wide front facing southeast, 24' deep, one-and-a-half stories high plus a cellar.
2. Foundations: Rough cut stone
3. Wall construction: Heavy timber frame structure, covered with clapboards on the front and sides with an average exposure of 4-1/4", covered with flush horizontal siding on the rear.
4. Stoops: Stone entrance stoops, one step high.
5. Chimneys: One brick chimney in the southwest end originally for a forge.
6. Openings
  - a. Doors: Simple batten doors: two on the southeast front side of the building, one very narrow door on the southwest side.

- b. Windows and shutters: Windows have 7"x9" lights. The northeast and southwest ends of the building have double hung windows, 8 light sash over 8 light, 9 light over 9 light, or 12 light over 12 light. The southeast front and northwest back of the building have paired, horizontally sliding windows. There are two pair on the front with 20 light sash, and one pair on the rear with 12 light sash. There are no shutters on the double hung windows. The sliding windows on the front and rear have folding batten shutters, hinged at the head and sill of the windows.

7. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: Gambrel roof framed without a ridge pole, with rafters spaced an average 27" on center. The roof overhangs about 2' on the front and back; no projection on the sides; covered with wood shingles.
- b. Eaves: Simple boxes eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The building has a cellar, main floor, and attic. The main floor was originally a single open space interrupted only by one post in the center of the room. It has now been partitioned into a lobby, conference room, drafting room, storeroom, and toilet. The attic is a single open space used only for storage.
2. Stairways: There is a modern disappearing overhead stairway to the attic.
3. Flooring: Wide board flooring.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Main floor: plaster ceilings; side board walls, both vertical and horizontal, with beaded edges on the boarding. Attic: exposed roof framing with areas between plastered.
5. Doors: Interior doors are modern.
6. Trim: Simple molded wood trim.
7. Hardware: Some original wrought iron hardware.
8. Lighting: Electric
9. Heating: Modern space heater

HABS  
CONN  
6-NORT.  
15-

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces southeast on a small, level lot, opposite the village green of a small settlement.
2. Landscaping: Informal landscaping with lawn, trees, and shrubs.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania  
October 1960